International Education Studies
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
November 2009

Debunking EHEA Myths: Common ECTS Misconceptions and Why They Are Wrong

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Abstract

The present article seeks to overcome some of the most common misconceptions which are currently proliferating in the application of the *European Credit Transfer System* (ECTS) at tertiary level. It presents and unpacks seven false myths affecting all the main curricular and organizational levels of the implementation of the new credit system -competencies, types of groupings and learning modalities, methodology, teacher and student roles, evaluation, and coordination-, expounding on why they are wrong and providing concrete examples of how to surmount them. The latter stem from five governmentally-funded pedagogical innovation projects and two investigations into the practical application of the *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA). Perhaps the most significant conclusion at which the paper arrives is that there is a pressing need to overcome misguided conceptions regarding the EHEA and to usher in a new era in the application of the ECTS based on accurate information and findings as opposed to perceptions.

Keywords: Higher education, Misconceptions, Pedagogical innovation, European Higher Education Area, European Credit Transfer System

1. Introduction

It is an uncontested fact that we are currently living a time of great change in higher education (HE) worldwide. As Ma (2008: 65) puts it, "Higher education in the world has experienced a drastic change in the last few decades". In Europe, this transformation is being channelled via a specific policy framework: the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), through the so-called "Bologna Process". The latter has "effected significant changes in the landscape of Higher Education" (Tudor, 2009: 35) and initiated "a period of immense upheaval" (Lawley, 2009: 197). Indeed, words such a *reform*, *restructuring*, *reframing*, or *renewal* abound at present in the specialized literature on education at tertiary level.

We are precisely at that crucial moment in Europe of moving from theorizing to practice, of translating the general European agenda into a successful local one in order to meet Bologna standards by 2010. As the Graz Declaration (2003: 5) states, "the main challenge now is to transform the multitude of legislative changes that have been taking place across Europe in the past few years into meaningful academic aims and institutional realities". In order for this goal to come to fruition, one of the greatest hurdles we currently face is lack of precise information on the practical application of the EHEA framework and its new credit system: the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Misinformation has plagued initial attempts at implementing the new European credit system and led to misconceptions or false myths regarding what Bologna is implying in the practical arena. It is these misguided perceptions that the present article strives to overcome by targeting seven of the most common misconceptions which are currently proliferating in European higher education at all curricular and organizational levels and by expounding on why they are wrong and how they can be surmounted.

2. The backdrop: our projects and studies

In doing so, we shall allude to evidence stemming from five pedagogical innovation projects and two governmentally-financed investigations carried out by the research group ESECS (*English Studies in the European Credit System* – www.esecs.eu). The latter has been working for five years to furnish empirical evidence on the functioning of the ECTS through a pilot programme for its implementation which has been put in practice at the University of Jaén starting in the academic year 2004-2005.

The pedagogical innovation projects have consisted in using ICT and new methodologies to favor student-centered learning approaches. In this sense, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), data-driven learning (DDL) (***Note 1***) (cf. Pérez Cañado and Díez Bedmar, 2006), telecollaboration (***Note 2***) (cf. Ware and Pérez Cañado, 2007; Pérez Cañado, 2008; Pérez Cañado and Ware, 2009), virtual learning environments (***Note 3***) (cf. Pérez Cañado et al., 2008), podcasting (cf. Torralbo Jover, 2008), Internet texts (***Note 4***) (cf. Sánchez Ballesteros, in press), and cooperative learning through

peer tutoring (***Note 5***) (cf. Pérez Cañado et al., 2007) have all been employed to promote greater autonomy, involvement, and participation within the studentship, in accordance with the underlying rationale of the EHEA (CIDUA, 2005; Pérez Gómez et al., 2009a).

In turn, the research projects have allowed us, on the one hand, to carry out a qualitative investigation into the way in which the ECTS is being applied in *Language Studies* degrees across Europe (***Note 6***). To this end, four sets of questionnaires have been designed, validated, and applied in order to carry out a detailed analysis of ECTS piloting and which involve both agents of the teaching-learning process (students and teachers). These surveys have analyzed whether and which competencies are being developed and evaluated in language degrees across Europe, estimated the real amount of work put in on the part of both agents, determined the main methodological aspects involved in the teaching-learning process under the ECTS, and measured the degree of satisfaction of professors and students.

On the other hand, our second investigation (***Note 7***) will enable us to complement these data with outcomes from a quantitative study which will compare ECTS and traditional methodologies using experimental and control groups. Global and specific subject results and disciplinary competencies are being contrasted in both language teaching approaches to gauge their differential effects. These results will be completed through in-depth focus group interviews with source triangulation (students – teachers – ECTS coordinators) which will allow us to arrive at a detailed diagnosis of the functioning of the ECTS in the degree of English Philology at the University of Jaén.

We will refer back to these projects and studies in illustrating how to debunk common ECTS misconceptions and promote a precise understanding of what the application of this new methodology entails. The thrust of our argument is that fostering an accurate interpretation of the Bologna Process is a necessary starting point to guarantee smooth sailing in the successful application of the EHEA framework.

3. Debunking ECTS myths: seven common misconceptions and why they are wrong

We now examine each of the main misconceptions which are affecting all curricular and organizational levels in the implementation of the ECTS, explain why they are wrong, and provide suggestions deriving from the afore-mentioned projects and studies to overcome them. We offer direct quotes actually uttered by professionals from different university degrees (languages, education, applied sciences, engineering) who are in the process of adapting to the ECTS in European universities.

3.1. "Of course I'm adapting to a competence-based model – I not only teach contents; I also play a movie in class from time to time".

This initial misrepresentation clearly points to a novel and largely unfamiliar concept which European universities have now incorporated as an integral part of their new degree structures: ***competencies***. Objectives are now formulated in terms of competencies and learning outcomes, which involve not only contents or cognitive knowledge, but also skills, values, and attitudes (OECD, DeSeCo, 2003). Competencies represent an initial attempt to overcome the traditional European university model based on transmission of knowledge through ex cathedra lecturing (Tudor, 2006) in favor of a student-centered, meaning-based one where critical thinking skills are promoted (Pérez Gómez et al., 2009a). They also strive to bring classroom learning closer to the problems and situations of real-world contexts (Humphreys, 2005; Pérez Gómez et al., 2009b) and to ensure that students can adapt the "skills learned in one situation to problems encountered in another: in a classroom, the workplace, their communities, or their personal lives" (AACU report, 2002: 21). The ultimate aim is to form flexible and adaptable professionals who can apply competencies to the varied, unforeseeable, and complex situations they will encounter throughout their personal, social, and professional lives (Pérez Gómez et al., 2009b) and who can thus become active and useful citizens in our democratic society.

However, in making the necessary qualitative leap and mind shift required to teach competencies and not merely contents, many educators mistakenly associate the other components of a competence with unsubstantial activities –e.g. movies or games-, failing to realize that teaching competencies requires considerably greater effort than transmitting contents (Martín Ortega, 2008). To take a case in point, it is much easier to teach students the basic features which have characterized the diverse language teaching methods which have proliferated since the mid-18th century until our days than to, in addition, enable them to critically appraise, compare, and counter-examine such methods in terms of their merits, pitfalls, and contributions to the language teaching panorama. Competencies involve not only traditionally taught procedural knowledge, but also general instrumental (e.g. oral and written communication or basic abilities in computing), systemic (e.g. critical capacity or creativity), and personal (e.g. teamwork or leadership) abilities (Tuning Project, 2006). However, many HE professors are still unfamiliar with the notion of competence and important questions continue to arise regarding its definition, methodology, and evaluation, largely due to the fact that we are still sorely lacking in empirically-validated proposals for the implementation and assessment of competencies, an area which is in urgent need of research and will undoubtedly open new avenues for future investigations (Pérez Cañado, coord., 2009).

In this sense, what is being done at the University of Jaén to overcome this initial misconception? When designing the new plans of study or degree programs at our University, there has been much awareness-raising of the full implications of competence-based learning. A conscious effort has been made to include a feasible number of competencies in the new undergraduate degrees –normally around 40- and, to ensure they are adequately mastered, each one has been worked on at three different levels (beginner – intermediate – advanced) across the diverse subjects. Furthermore, specific student-centered methodologies have been assigned to each set of competencies covered in a subject and concrete evaluation procedures have been specified to assess their achievement. Finally, a realistic estimate of the number of hours required to master each competence has been made; that is, its *notional learning time* has been calculated to ensure careful thought is put into the requirements for its mastery. Through this detailed examination and planning of all the elements which factor into competence achievement, teachers will hopefully become aware that this new concept goes well beyond mere content instruction or inane activities and requires time and effort for adequate mastery.

3.2. "Students are supposed to learn other things in addition to contents at university (e.g. critical thinking skills), but we don't need to teach them explicitly".

This second misguided comment is directly related to the previous one, as is also affects the teaching of ***competencies***. This quote, while correctly acknowledging what competencies imply (e.g. certain essential skills and abilities such as critical thinking), is, however, misguided in the methodology it associates with their instruction. Competencies need to be explicitly addressed and incorporated into HE teaching (especially cross-curricular generic ones), as, otherwise, we run the risk of not covering them at all. If left to be implicitly picked up –as has largely been the case prior to the creation of the EHEA-, competencies will most probably not be developed at all (Martín Ortega, 2008). And this is a chance we cannot take, given the current importance which potential employers attach to competencies: as De Miguel Díaz et al. (2006) underscore, employers not only look for professionals who are content-specialists in their respective areas of study, but who can work in a team, think creatively, demonstrate leadership abilities, or solve problems in the workplace, all generic competencies which now need to be overtly developed in the new EHEA degree programs.

Regrettably, this is still not the generalized case in Europe, as one of our very recent studies has revealed (Pérez Cañado, coord., 2009). According to the over 300 European students in our sample, these systemic competencies which employers foreground and which involve critical thinking skills, creativity, problem-solving, or capacity to adapt to new situations are precisely the ones they consider to be least developed and evaluated in HE language degrees.

Thus, fully aware that this is a glaring lacuna in our current education system, we have set up an ECTS seminar system at the University of Jaén during the academic year 2008-2009 in order to overcome it. These seminars have taken place once a month, from November to January and from March to May, and have consisted of six-hour monographic sessions which have focused on and developed certain cross-curricular generic competences previously diagnosed as particularly problematic for our English Philology undergraduate students (e.g. written and oral communication in English, the use of Internet resources to foster learner autonomy, or research techniques). Original materials for each session have been drawn up by teaching teams (Michavila, 2007) or clusters (Zabalza Beraza, 2004), thereby fostering coordination across subjects and interdisciplinary dialogue (Bousquet, 2008; Brantmeier, 2008; Pratt et al., 2008; Schechtman and Koser, 2008; Wellmon, 2008), and subsequently uploaded onto the virtual learning platform of our University (ILIAS) for unlimited student and teacher access (cf. Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 here.

This initiative, which has proved extremely successful in its initial year of piloting (cf. Pérez Cañado, in press, a), has ensured the explicit coverage of essential generic competencies in our language curriculum, thereby contributing to debunk our second ECTS myth.

3.3. "I have no objection to devoting an hour a week to 'seminars', but when I'm getting behind in my program, I use them as another theoretical class".

This third quote clearly points to an ECTS misconception related to ***types of groupings*** and ***learning modalities***. According to the current official EHEA literature (CIDUA, 2005; Pérez Gómez et al., 2009a), the traditional theory/practice dichotomy observed in most European universities needs to be superseded by a bevy of different classroom organizations and learning modalities. There is still ample work to be done on this front, as many professors have trouble letting go of an almost exclusive reliance on traditional lockstep lecturing (Pérez Gómez et al., 2009a) and in understanding what types of activities can be carried out in smaller seminar groups. Indeed, in this sense, a recent study carried out within our FINEEES research project (cf. Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa, in press) revealed that, according to the 218 students interviewed in focus groups, these seminars still have "fuzzy limits", as they are simply used to continue advancing with the theoretical contents of the program or are not taught at all, thereby being used as a sort of study hall period for autonomous student work.

In order to foster this greater variety of groupings and modalities, at the University of Jaén, we now work with three main types of classroom arrangements: the whole group (comprising all the students in a particular subject), the basic group (with a maximum of 25 students), and the work group (from 4 to 6 students). These types of groupings intersect with another set of varied learning modalities:

- *Theoretical sessions*, which transmit knowledge through expositive and explanatory classes.
- *Practical sessions*, which put the theoretically transmitted knowledge into practice.
- *Seminars* and *workshops*, which favor student interaction for knowledge-building and assimilation of concepts.
- *Tutorials*, which offer personalized attention to optimize the learning process. In this sense, not only is the traditional *bureocratic-functional tutorial* employed to revise exams or solve doubts related to assignments, but *academic tutorials* are also used (to offer academic orientation and bibliographical guidance), together with *teaching-learning tutorials* (where contents are reinforced and feedback on different projects is provided), and *personalized tutorials* (to offer professional orientation or personal advice).
- *External training,* which completes the students' formation in a professional context.
- *Group work,* which promotes social interaction and cooperation in order to consolidate knowledge and improve understanding.
- *Individual work,* which aims at developing self-directed learning.

Below is an illustration of how these diverse types of groupings and learning modalities intersect at our University, thereby overcoming the traditional theory/practice dichotomy and fostering an adequate use of seminars:

Insert Figure 2 here.

3.4. "If I don't explain the contents of the subject to the students, they are incapable of passing the exam".

Our fourth false myth addresses perhaps the most patently affected curricular level in terms of ECTS changes: ***methodology***. This quote clearly reflects the European university view of teaching at tertiary level and harks back to a traditionalist stance which sees teaching as transmission of knowledge and learning as reproduction of contents (Pérez Gómez et al., 2009c). This understanding of teaching at tertiary level often leads to what we have come to term "bulimic learning", where the students receive vast amounts of theoretical information from the professor, which they then proceed to memorize and regurgitate in an exam, quickly forgetting it due to its lack of recency or applicability to new contexts (Pérez Gómez et al., 2009a). It also induces the belief that university students need to be spoonfed the contents of the subjects they are taking, a tendency which can frequently be observed at European university.

However, contrary to these beliefs, the underlying rationale of the EHEA maintains that all the information students need is accessible to them through information networks such as the Internet. Thus, post-secondary teaching should be concerned with equipping learners with the tools they need to find, select, use, and interpret the vast amount of data they have within their reach (Pérez Gómez et al., 2009a). Competencies such as critical thinking skills or the ability to synthesize and analyze should be developed, and the move should be made towards a self-directed, autonomous learning where students' independence, involvement, and participation are fostered. As McLaren et al. (2005: 27) put it, the onus should now be "on successful learning rather than on the teaching provided".

This shift can be pushed forward by fostering pedagogical innovation and a "methodological plurality" (CIDUA, 2005: 26, 29) or method synergistics (Canagarajah, 2002). Within the latter, the traditional lockstep lecture does not disappear, but is used alongside other student-centered methods such as problem-based learning (PBL), project-oriented learning (POL), case studies, or cooperative learning (De Miguel Díaz et al., 2006).

At the University of Jaén, this is precisely what we have done through the pedagogical innovation projects mentioned in section 2. Alongside the more traditional focus on form approach (Norris and Ortega, 2000), we have now also incorporated aspects of cooperative learning (via our telecollaboration and peer tutoring projects), CALL (through our DDL experience), blended learning (thanks to the use of virtual learning environments in our sitcom and podcasting projects), the Lexical Approach (since lexical chunks have been the prime vocabulary aspect targeted in our sitcom, podcasting, and Internet projects), or Neurolinguistic Programming and Multiple Intelligence Theory (as we have worked on the main writing weaknesses of our students appealing to their different learning styles and preferred primary representational systems in the DDL and telecollaboration projects) (cf. Pérez Cañado, in press, b, for greater detail). All in all, with these projects, we have aimed to progress from a teacher-dominated to a student-centered paradigm, where both agents assume new roles and the professor ceases to be the exclusive source of information.

3.5. "My students still need me to do some teaching; I can't forego it in order to hand over the responsibility to them".

Teacher and student roles are precisely what this next misrepresentation targets. The newfound advocacy of the afore-mentioned student-centered methodology could be mistakenly construed as involving the disappearance of the

teacher. This view is completely off-base; teachers and students merely have to be prepared to adopt new roles within the new credit system (McLaren et al., 2005; Martínez Lirola, 2007).

In the novel ECTS context, professors continue to be ***directors*** or ***orchestrators***, ***instructors*** or ***expert transmitters*** of knowledge; that is, ***sources of information*** or "*pozos de ciencia*" (***Note 8***), in Medina's (2004: 44) words. However, we are now also ***motivators***, ***dynamizers***, ***stimulators***, and ***creators*** of a positive classroom atmosphere through the numerous pedagogical innovation projects we are putting into practice in the classroom. We become ***counsellors***, ***tutors***, and ***advisers*** in the personalized tutorials. We act as ***guides***, ***helpers***, ***facilitators***, and ***resources*** in the seminar activities and in providing the students with references and guidelines for their autonomous work. We turn into ***observers*** and ***participants*** in the learners' debates and peer tutoring sessions. We ***plan***, ***monitor***, and ***supervise*** the on-line telecollaboration exchange, peer tutoring project, and VLE lexical activities. We, of course, ***assess*** the outcomes of both the formative and summative work. We also turn into ***investigators*** of the findings yielded by our pedagogical innovation projects via the empirical studies which accompany them. And we equally need to engage in a greater ***collaboration***, ***communication***, and ***transparency*** (Giménez de la Peña and López Gutiérrez, 2006; Miedes Ugarte and Galán García, 2006; Pozuelos et al., 2006) with our colleagues in setting up joint projects (e.g. in the peer tutoring experience) and in ensuring smooth transitions between related subjects. In this sense, Giménez de la Peña and López Gutiérrez (2006: 10) stress that "*[…] una de las innovaciones que plantea el nuevo modelo docente es la apertura a la colaboración entre profesores y asignaturas para favorecer la comprensión de distintos puntos de vista o la intervención en diferentes ambientes.*" (***Note 9***)

All in all, the university teacher assumes a crucial role as ***catalyst of change*** (Miedes Ugarte and Galán García, 2006; Pérez Gómez et al., 2009c). This, not surprisingly, is entailing a greater amount of work, preparation, dedication, and change of mindset on the part of the teacher (Ron Vaz et al., 2006), which is not being achieved without difficulty (Jiménez Reina et al*.,* 2006) and which sometimes verges on overload (Martos Montes et al., 2006; Pozuelos et al*.*, 2006; Pérez Cañado, coord., 2009). In our specific case, the elaboration of original material (e.g. in the VLE project), the set-up, monitoring, and evaluation of the telecollaboration and peer tutoring experiences, or the investigations undertaken to determine the effects of our innovation are certainly involving a noteworthy effort on our part, though an undoubtedly worthwhile one.

A similar difficulty in the transformation of student roles is being perceived in the new system (e.g. Díaz Negrillo and Valera Hernández, 2006). Students now have to take responsibility for their own learning and to undergo an academic and personal maturation process. They are no longer passive recipients or empty vessels who accumulate and repeat the information received (Domingo et al., 2007), but, rather, the protagonists of the learning process. In Martínez Lirola's (2007: 36) words, "*[…] el alumno, estimulado por la voluntad interactiva del profesor, ha de participar activamente en el aula, tomando las riendas cuando el profesor o la actividad se lo exija. Debe cambiar ciertos hábitos acomodaticios y pasivos, convencerse de que es, en realidad, el centro del proceso y afrontar con decisión ese reto.*" (***Note 10***)

This learner-centered education has induced significant changes for the studentship. The learners are more ***autonomous*** and ***independent*** (McLaren et al., 2005; Ron Vaz et al., 2006; Martínez Lirola, 2007) (e.g. through the telecollaboration tasks and lexical activities they have to complete in their personal work hours); more ***active*** and ***participative*** in classroom activities (Giménez de la Peña and López Gutiérrez, 2006) (e.g. by means of the "jury" system established to evaluate their classmates' presentations in the peer tutoring project); more ***creative*** (Martínez Lirola, 2007; Domingo et al., 2007; Pérez Cañado, 2009); and more ***involved in the decision-making process*** (Taibi, 2006) (e.g. through our choice of DVDs for the VLE project based on their preferences). This clearly leads to an increased ***personalization*** of the learning process (Ron Vaz et al., 2006) and to a heightened ***contact*** and ***closer relationship*** between teacher and student (Martos Montes et al., 2006).

Handing over responsibility to our learners therefore does not entail the disappearance of the figure of the teacher, but rather, a reconfiguration of the roles of both agents in the teaching-learning process, something which has numerous assets. According to Martos Montes et al. (2006) and Felder and Brent (1996), all these changes are favoring more significant learning, greater retention of knowledge, and processing at a deeper level on the part of the student.

3.6. "There's nothing like a final exam to provide information about the students' progress and what they have learnt".

Just as the ECTS is advocating an increased variety of teacher and student roles, of methodologies, and of learning modalities and groupings, so is it bolstering a more diversified range of ***evaluation*** techniques and strategies. Thus, the final exam as the sole source of assessment is fast being outed. As Pérez Gómez et al. (2009d) underscore, the final test is a frozen snapshot of the contents mastered by the students at a certain time and it favors the development of lower-order competencies (such as memorization and reproduction of information) vs. higher-rank ones (like analysis, synthesis, or reflection).

Thus, it should be combined with more formative or ongoing assessment techniques and should become one more evaluation procedure, albeit not necessarily the most significant one (De Miguel Díaz et al., 2006). The ones we have

incorporated in the ECTS pilot experience at our university range from short answer objective tests to oral interviews and presentations (e.g. in the peer tutoring project), reports and/or diaries on practical activities (e.g. after each telecollaboration task), portfolios (e.g. of the students' written production in the telecollaboration exchange), self-assessment systems (e.g. in the peer tutoring project), attitude scales (at the end of all our pedagogical innovation endeavors), or global assessment sessions (e.g. in the focus groups interviews within the FINEEES Project).

And this positive turnaround in evaluation techniques has been acknowledged and valued by our students, since they claim to be aware of this greater diversification in assessment procedures. They appreciate that the final exam is now one more evaluation strategy and consider that the formative assessment promoted in the ECTS more fairly reflects the amount of work and effort they put into each subject (Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa, in press).

3.7. "We're really going to advance with coordination this year, because the same person is teaching two complementary subjects".

However, these positive results obtained with regard to evaluation are not sustained when it comes to ***coordination***, the crucial organizational aspect of the ECTS targeted in this final misconception. Both the FINEEES (Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa, in press) and ADELEEES (Pérez Cañado, coord., 2009) research projects have revealed that coordination still remains a niche to be filled with future ECTS initiatives. Indeed, in the former, the students detected lack of coordination between subjects and assignments, and even within the theoretical and practical parts of the same subject. In turn, in the latter, it transpired that teachers and students had a radically different view of what is happening in the application of the new credit system in language degrees, the teachers' outlook being significantly more positive than the students'. Thus, coordination between and within both participants in the teaching-learning process needs to be intensified and brought to the forefront, so that coordination with oneself –as this final quote portrays- is not the only type being deployed in the new credit system.

This need is foregrounded in the official EHEA literature, with the importance of coordination running through the Graz Declaration (2003) and Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005) Communiqués. In Spain, the creation of "clusters" of teachers and subjects or "teaching teams" is also strongly advocated by Zabalza Beraza (2004) or Michavila (2007). As Martín Ortega (2008) puts it, Spanish university is at present one of the worst examples of individualism in teaching endeavors and nothing significant can be achieved in this context if not undertaken cooperatively.

In order to promote this coordination and cooperation amongst teachers at our university, we have established a campus-wide system of ECTS seminars for professors. The latter have taken place roughly once a month and have consisted in three- to four-hour sessions where teachers from different Spanish, European, and North American universities have shared innovative ECTS experiences which they have successfully implemented in their classrooms. Dialogue, debate, and reflection have been promoted, as well as teacher communication and coordination, and learning from others' best practices (Michavila, 2009). A further beneficial spin-off of these seminars has been the creation of teaching teams amongst professors from related disciplines, who have drawn up the programs for the new degree structures in a coordinated fashion, establishing similar methods, groupings, and evaluation techniques to guarantee a smooth transition across years and courses for the studentship. Fostering this coordination is essential, as it could well become the lynchpin of the new European Credit Transfer System.

4. Conclusion

The present article has sought to overcome some of the most common misconceptions which are currently proliferating in the application of the European Credit Transfer System at tertiary level. It has presented and unpacked seven false myths affecting all the main curricular and organizational levels of the implementation of the new credit system -competencies, types of groupings and learning modalities, methodology, teacher and student roles, evaluation, and coordination-, expounding on why they are wrong and providing concrete examples of how to surmount them. The latter have stemmed from five governmentally-funded pedagogical innovation projects and two investigations into the practical application of the European Higher Education Area.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion at which we can arrive after the examination of these misguided assumptions is that there is a pressing need to overcome them and to usher in a new era in the application of the ECTS based on accurate information and findings as opposed to perceptions. To guarantee the success of the Bologna Process, we need to reengineer these misconceptions. Perhaps, as Martín Ortega (2008) ventures, 15 years from now we will be surprised that these questions were even spawning misinterpretations, but at present, we need to start generating change and continue forging new ground in the creation of our common European project. And the first step in doing this is to dislodge entrenched ideas which are misguiding the convergence process in order to wedge in new models of thinking and teaching in tertiary education. As Keynes (1936) put it, "The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones, which ramify […] into every corner of our minds".

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Notes

Note 1. "Problemas de composición escrita en la universidad española: la utilización de la Enseñanza de Lenguas Asistida por Ordenador para incrementar la toma de conciencia" (Departamento de Filología Inglesa de la Universidad de Jaén, 2004-2005)

Note 2. "Las nuevas tecnologías en el sistema ECTS: un estudio empírico sobre la telecolaboración" (Convocatoria de Proyectos de Innovación Docente, 2006-2007)

Note 3. "Las TIC en el ECTS: el desarrollo de la competencia léxica a través de la enseñanza virtual" (Consejería de Innovación y Ciencia de la Junta de Andalucía, 2006-2007)

Note 4. "Los efectos diferenciales de la implantación del crédito europeo en la asignatura de Inglés Instrumental Intermedio" (Convocatoria de Proyectos de Innovación Docente, 2005-2006)

Note 5. "INNOFIL: La innovación docente en Filología Inglesa en el marco del EEES" (Convocatoria de Proyectos de Innovación Docente, 2007-2009)

Note 6. Project ADELEEES: "Adaptación de la enseñanza de lenguas al EEES: Análisis del estado actual, establecimiento de redes europeas y aplicación de los nuevos títulos de Grado", financed by the Ministerio Ciencia e Innovación ("Subvenciones de acciones destinadas a la mejora de la calidad de la Enseñanza Superior y de la actividad del profesorado universitario en el año 2008", Programa Estudios y Análisis, Ref. EA2008-0173)

Note 7. Project FINEEES: "La Filología Inglesa en el Espacio Europeo de la Educación Superior" (Evaluado por la ANEP, Universidad de Jaén, Plan de Apoyo a la Investigación, Acción 16, Ref. UJA_08_16_35)

Note 8. "wells of science" (our translation)

Note 9. "one of the innovations of the new teaching model is the openness to collaborate between teachers and subjects in order to foster the understanding of diverse points of view or intervention in different environments" (our translation)

Note 10. "The student, stimulated by the teacher's interactive will, must participate actively in the classroom, taking control when the teacher or the activity require it. S/he must change certain passive habits, in the conviction that s/he is, in fact, the center of the process, facing that challenge decisively." (Our translation)

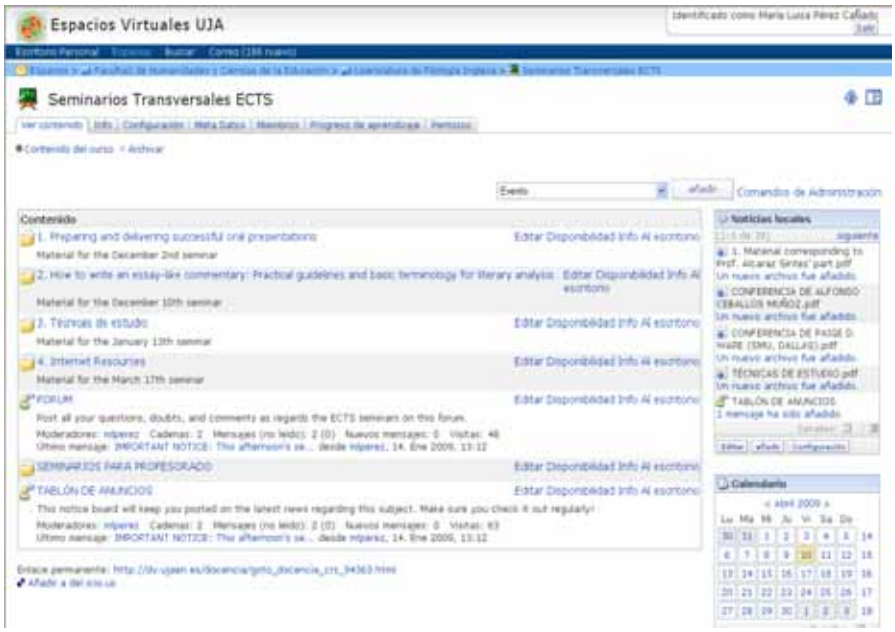

Figure 1

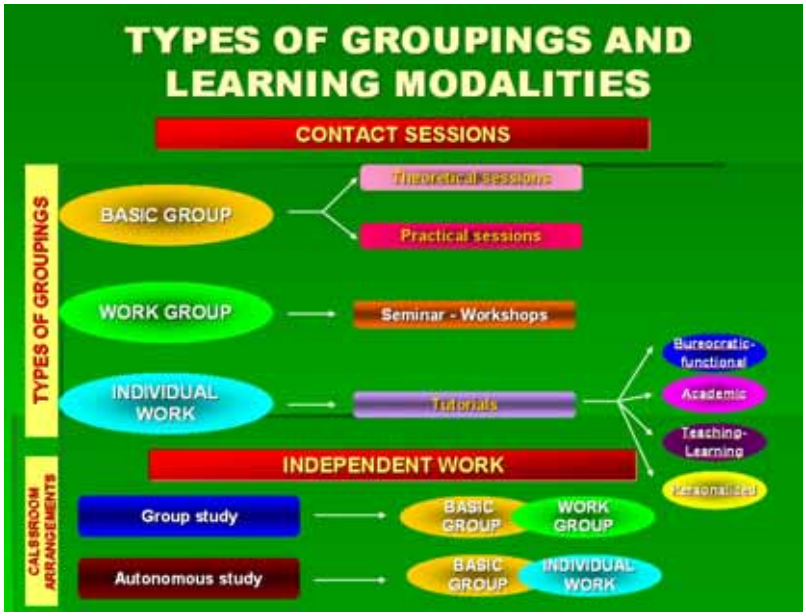

Figure 2